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ABSTRACT

Latinos and Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) are increasing in numbers throughout the United States. This study reports on a survey administered to 350 APA and 119 Latino American students entering a large east coast university. Significant differences between APA and Latino students emerged: (1) APA students were less likely than Latino students to believe that they had leadership skills; (2) APA students were more open to seeking help for emotional-social concerns and were more interested in becoming involved through campus organizations than were Latino students; (3) Latino Americans were more comfortable working with others on group projects than were APA students; and (4) APA students tended to have racially similar friends and anticipated being lonely their first year in college. Some similarities across racial groups were also evident and included students who were interested in seeking counseling for problems with alcohol were likely join a fraternity or sorority. Likewise, students from both groups expected to have a difficult time adjusting to collegiate social life and were interested in counseling. Finally, results showed some racial difference on perceptions and expectations about college, such as Latino American students believing more than APA students that studying, meeting others, and budgeting time would be the easiest parts of college. Contains 50 references. Three tables present statistical analysis. (RJM)

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Perceptions of Co-Curricular Involvement and Counseling Use Among Incoming Asian Pacific and Latino American College Students

William M. Liu, M.A. and William E. Sedlacek

University of Maryland at College Park

Research Report # 7-96

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Running Head: PERCEPTIONS OF CO-CURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT AND COUNSELING USE AMONG INCOMING ASIAN PACIFIC AND LATINO AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

Perceptions of Co-Curricular Involvement and Counseling Use Among Incoming Asian Pacific and Latino American College Students

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Summary

The University New Student Census (UNSC) was administered to a representative sample of 350 APA and 119 Latino American students entering a large east coast university. There were 182 APA males (56%) and 62 Latino males (45%); there were 168 APA females (44%) and 57 Latinas (55%).

Significant differences between APA and Latino students showed that, (a) APA students were less likely than Latino students to believe they had leadership skills; (b) APA students were more open to seeking help for emotional-social concerns; (c) APA students were more interested in becoming involved through campus organizations than Latino students; (d) Latino American students showed more comfort in working with others on group projects than APA students; (e) APA students tend to have racially similar friends; (f) APA students anticipating being lonely the first year more than Latino students; and (g) APA students anticipating a difficulty time adjusting to collegiate social life more than Latino students.

For both racial groups, those students interested in seeking counseling for problems with alcohol were likely to join a fraternity or sorority, have difficulty organizing their time, believe they will have a difficult time adjusting to collegiate social life, and be interested in emotional social counseling. Students interested in seeking emotional social counseling were also likely to be interested in joining a fraternity or sorority, believe they will have a difficult time adjusting to collegiate social life, have difficulty organizing their time, have friends of the same race, believe they will have difficulty adjusting to collegiate academic work, need additional information on majors, expected to be lonely during their freshmen year, be interested in career counseling, and be interested in counseling for problems with alcohol. Those students interested in career counseling were also likely to believe they will have a difficult time adjusting to collegiate social life, have difficulty organizing their time, believe they will have difficulty adjusting to collegiate academic work, and need more information on majors.

Results also showed racial differences on perceptions and expectations about college. Latino American students tended to believe more than APA students that studying efficiently, meeting other students, budgeting time, and meeting different people were going to be the easiest parts of college. However, APA students tended to believe that being independent, earning satisfactory grades, meeting financial expenses, leaving their family, and selecting a major or career were going to be the easiest parts of college.

Perceptions of Co-Curricular Involvement and Counseling Use Among Incoming Asian Pacific and Latino American College Students

Introduction

Latinos and Asian Pacific Americans (APA) are increasing in numbers throughout the United States and are touted as the two fastest growing non-White minority groups (Hodgkinson, 1992; Census Bureau 1995; Liu, 1995; U.S. Census, 1992). While historically concentrated in certain regions of the United States (e.g., California and the southwest) (Pace, 1990), these two groups are quickly expanding to other regions such as the North East (de la Garza, 1993; Laval, Borea, & Ruiz, 1983). Places in the U.S. that were once unfamiliar with groups of Latinos and APAs, are now faced with communities settling down. Concomitantly with the rise in population density is the fact that Latinos and APAs are also recording increases in higher educational institutions (Carter & Wilson, 1993; Evangelauf, 1988).

As the two groups increase in size, institutions will be challenged to meet their needs. Latino and APA students will find that they will start feeling pressures on them that will necessitate seeking assistance for their issues (Padilla, 1992). For example, experiences with racism, difficulties balancing between two cultures, academic and career issues all can exacerbate feelings of alienation on a predominantly White campus. In a review of 300 to 350 counseling centers over eight years, an increasing number of students were found to have issues revolving around stress, anxiety, nervousness, depression, and academic concerns (Murray, 1996). Counseling centers also report an increase of 64% in hospitalizations from 1986, and 87% of the counseling centers reported increasing severity of presenting issues from 1988 (Murray, 1996). In this study, participation in co-curricular activities (i.e., clubs and organizations) was used to assess the students' openness toward seeking mental health services on a college campus (i.e., counseling on personal, academic, or career concerns). The discussion will focus on the specific needs of Latino and APA students and what can be done to assist them better.

Latino American Students

The term Latino/a will be used throughout this study rather than Hispanic, unless the original author used a specific ethnicity to designate their group (e.g., Mexican), because it has been deemed as more acceptable (Vasquez, 1994). In general, Latino students face a myriad of

educational barriers in college. Even before they get to college, Mexican Americans, when compared to all racial groups, have been reported to have the lowest educational attainment, highest rates of poverty and unemployment (Chacon, Cohen, Camerena, Gonzalez, & Stover, 1985; Kavanaugh & Retish, 1991). In college, some of these issues for Mexican American college students may manifest as financial stress that eventually impacts their academic performance (Kavanaugh & Retish, 1991). Latino students may also suffer from poor academic preparedness prior to entering college and be faced with few role models once they enter (i.e., faculty and staff). These are variables that further exacerbate their feelings of alienation and dissatisfaction (Bennett & Okinaka, 1990; Kavanaugh & Retish, 1991; Olivas, 1982; Sedlacek, 1987).

Latino students may feel estranged from the college environment because they are faced with balancing assimilating to the mainstream or retaining their Latino culture (Padilla, 1992). Latino culture is important in their overall educational attainment, as well as acculturation, prior academic performance and the parental expectations (Ramos & Sanchez, 1995). Latinos are also interested in participating in the collegiate life (Pace, 1990). However, in college, some of the barriers to Latino leadership may be institutional racism and ignorance of Latino values (Fuertes & Sedlacek, 1993). The importance of Latino clubs and organizations is especially acute for students at risk, who were more likely to have social supports (i.e., clubs and organizations) and to be open to career counseling than those who were academically high achieving (Nelson, 1994). Differences are also found in how Latino students choose participating in clubs. Latino students who join non-Latino organizations tended not to feel that other Latino students had special needs (Fuertes, Sedlacek, & Westbrook, 1989).

Counseling and counselor preferences showed that Mexican-American students who had a strong commitment to the Mexican-American culture displayed more interest in culturally similar counselor and less willingness to self-disclose (Sanchez & Atkinson, 1983). A gender difference was also found such that women were more likely to use counseling services (Sanchez & Atkinson, 1983). Regardless of acculturation level, Latinos preferred counselors that were directive and used probing versus reflection (Borrego, Chavez, & Titley, 1982). This may be due to the unfamiliarity of counseling to Latinos or the preference for a more structured environment (Sue & Sue, 1990). These counselors were seen as knowledgeable and willing to help (Ponce &

Atkinson, 1989; Pomales & Williams, 1989).

Asian Pacific American Students

The term Asian Pacific American is used to denote the diversity of territories represented in "Asian America" (Liu, 1995; Liu & Sedlacek, 1995). Contrary to the model minority myth that touts academic and economic achievement by APAs (Yee, 1992), APA students sometimes have difficulty adjusting in college (Kuo, 1984) due to issues such as financial concerns that could influence their eventual graduation (Liu & Sedlacek, 1995). APA students who do persist at a college may feel alienated and dissatisfied (Bennett & Okinaka, 1990). The dissatisfaction may be because they do not value participation in student organizations as much as other racial groups (Pace, 1990). Most APA students coming into college tend to see it as a vehicle to a job or graduate school (Liu & Sedlacek, 1995).

In using counseling, Solberg, Ritsma, Davis, Tata, & Jolly (1994) found that APA students who had previous counseling experience were more likely to seek help from a counseling center for issues of substance abuse, interpersonal concerns, and academic problems. Additionally, APA women were more likely to have higher "severity ratings for substance abuse issues than did Asian-American men" but no ethnicity effect was found (Solberg, Ritsma, et al., 1994, p. 275).

Acculturation is an important variable to discuss because it could effect a number of ways APAs participate on the college campus. Over a 10 year period, APAs seemed to become more involved on a predominantly White campus (Kohatsu & Sedlacek, 1990). Acculturation may not be important in participation since various groups can cater to more or less acculturated individuals (e.g., a Chinese culture group for those who can speak Chinese and those who speak English is common) (Balon, 1995; Wang, Sedlacek, & Westbrook, 1991). Those APA students who did enjoy participating in organizations that were ethnic specific, expressed some feeling of isolation from the rest of the campus and preferred "mainstream" organizations (Wang, Sedlacek, & Westbrook, 1991). Another form of interaction was participation in the off-campus community (Fuertes, Sedlacek, & Liu, 1994). Their connection to the community may also reflect some preference for social and psychological support (e.g., clergy) (Solberg, Choi, Ritsma, & Jolly, 1994).

Acculturation is also an important consideration for counseling. Level of acculturation was

associated with use of psychological services such as group counseling (Atkinson & Gim, 1989; Leong, Wagner, & Kim, 1995; Tata & Leong, 1994). Atkinson and Gim (1989) found that, although highly acculturated APA's had more positive attitudes about seeking help, they were less willing to do so than less acculturated APAs. However, Atkinson, Lowe, and Matthews (1995) found no significant association between acculturation and gender with willingness to seek counseling, but did find that APAs were more likely to seek help for academic versus personal problems. Since career and academic issues are a priority among APAs, it is not unlikely to find these as presenting concerns (Cheng, Leong, & Geist, 1993; Liu & Sedlacek, 1995; Tracey, Leong, & Glidden, 1986). Those APAs who were less acculturated were also found to be willing to seek help from campus facilities (i.e., counseling center), campus support groups (i.e., campus ethnic and non-ethnic organizations), and off campus resources (i.e., religious persons) (Atkinson, Whiteley, & Gim, 1990; Solberg, Choi, et al., 1994). The importance of acculturation may be related to matching client variables such as ethnicity and language in order to retain clients through therapy (Lin, 1994). Similar to the Latino clients, APA's tended to prefer directive modes of counseling versus ambiguity (Sue & Sue, 1990).

Similarities Between Latino and APA College Students

Both groups are experiencing mixed gains in higher education (Carter & Wilson, 1993). Along with the increase in their population, students from these racial groups also experience similar issues. Latino and APA students both may express anxiety in interaction with Caucasians (Stephan & Stephan, 1989). The APA's anxiety is based on more negative attitudes and less positive relations with Caucasians, while the Latino's anxiety is based on fear of rejection and discrimination from the Caucasians (Stephan & Stephan, 1989). Latino and APAs also have similar concerns about language, class, and cultural barriers (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989).

Latinos and APAs also have similar perceptions about their college environment and experiences (Pace, 1990; Patterson & Sedlacek, 1979). Liu (1995) found that satisfaction with the campus environment, as measured by the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (Pace, 1990), was associated with successful and meaningful interaction with faculty and clubs and organizations. Women were found to participate more than men, in both races, in all areas except athletics and recreational activities and science an technology. The findings represent some gender

stereotypical roles such that men were involved in physical and technology related areas while the women were in the fine arts.

While parental issues have been speculated to be important in college adaptation of APA and Latino students (Oliver, Rodriguez, & Mickelson, 1985; York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991), prior exposure of the parents to college was not significantly associated with student participation for both groups (Liu, 1995). This could mean that parents were unfamiliar with the American college environment or that students tended to rely on peers or cohort groups to ease their transition in college.

Experiences with racism were also important in how APA and Latino students viewed the college environment which could effect overall retention (Atkinson & Gim, 1989; Fuertes, Sedlacek, & Liu, 1994; Liu & Sedlacek, 1995). Between the two groups, APA's have been found to perceive of more racial discrimination than Latinos (Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991; White & Sedlacek, 1987). However, there is evidence to the contrary that states successful White, Latino and APA may not differ in interaction styles and experience alienation similarly (Steward, Germain, & Jackson, 1992).

In regards to counseling use, findings suggest that APAs and Latinos tend to underutilize mental health services when compared to Blacks, Native Americans and Whites (Sue, Zane, & Young, 1994). Since these are racial groups, it is important for counselors to be aware of cultural issues that may cause conflicts and to address issues of culture and acculturation as a means to facilitate therapy (Sue, et al., 1994; Sue & Sue, 1990).

Summary

The literature suggests that APA and Latino students are fast becoming an important racial community on colleges. The demographic changes are challenging institutions to meet the diversifying and various issues APA and Latino students may present in counseling. Both groups have also experienced racial and gender discrimination, and combined with pressures of academia and economics, students from these racial groups may present counselors with an assortment of issues. One of the concerns that needs to be addressed is how well the APA and Latino student is adjusting to the environment and navigating the system. Another is how well these students are able to balance cultural issues that may be pulling at them. One way that these students may find

some support is through their student organizations. Since acculturation and language can be accommodated in various groups, participation in these groups may be a way to become familiar with the campus. Thus, students who participate in student organizations may also be likely to use counseling services that the campus provides. This study investigates the co-curricular associations with counseling use with these two groups.

Method

The University New Student Census (UNSC) was administered to a representative sample of 350 APA and 119 Latino American students entering a large east coast university. There were 182 APA males (56%) and 62 Latino males (45%); there were 168 APA females (44%) and 57 Latinas (55%). The UNSC was designed to assess the backgrounds, expectations, and attitudes of incoming students. Data were analyzed using MANOVA, Pearson correlation, and a chi-squares. All differences discussed below were significant at the .05 level.

Results

MANOVA (Wilks Lambda = .79, F (46, 422) = 2.45, $p < .05$) differences showed significantly that, between APA and Latino students, (a) APA students were less likely than Latino students to believe they had leadership skills; (b) APA students were more open to seeking help for emotional-social concerns; (c) APA students were more interested in becoming involved through campus organizations than Latino students; (d) Latino American students showed more comfort in working with others on group projects than APA students; (e) APA students tend to have racially similar friends; (f) APA students anticipating being lonely the first year more than Latino students; and (g) APA students anticipating a difficulty time adjusting to collegiate social life more than Latino students.

Insert Table 1 about here

Pearson-product correlations were also conducted on APA and Latino American students. For both racial groups, those students interested in seeking counseling for problems with alcohol were likely to join a fraternity or sorority (r=.11), have difficulty organizing their time (r=.37), believe they will have a difficult time adjusting to collegiate social life (r=.11), and be interested in

emotional social counseling (r=.37).

Students interested in seeking emotional social counseling were also likely to be interested in joining a fraternity or sorority (r=.15), believe they will have a difficult time adjusting to collegiate social life (r=.25), have difficulty organizing their time (r=.19), have friends of the same race (r=.12), believe they will have difficulty adjusting to collegiate academic work (r=.19), need additional information on majors (r=.16), expected to be lonely during their freshmen year (r=.14), be interested in career counseling (r=.25), and be interested in counseling for problems with alcohol (r=.37).

Those students interested in career counseling were also likely to believe they will have a difficult time adjusting to collegiate social life (r=.13), have difficulty organizing their time (r=.13), believe they will have difficulty adjusting to collegiate academic work (r=.13), and need more information on majors (r=.43).

Insert Table 2 about here

A series of chi-square analyses were employed to examine racial differences on perceptions and expectations about college. Results showed that Latino American students tended to believe more than APA students that studying efficiently, meeting other students, budgeting time, and meeting different people were going to be the easiest parts of college. However, APA students tended to believe that being independent, earning satisfactory grades, meeting financial expenses, leaving their family, and selecting a major or career were going to be the easiest parts of college.

Insert Table 3 about here

Discussion

Murray (1996) noted that current college students seemed to be more willing to seek psychological help than in previous years. Differences in using emotional-social counseling and between the APA and Latino American group may be a reflection of APA students greater awareness of counseling services as well as the possibility that personal issues may create the need

for more help. Since the item did not specify use of counseling services at the university, APA students may be open to other sources of psychological help (e.g., clergy or community mental health center) (Solberg, Ritsma, et al., 1994). APA students also seemed more interested in becoming involved in campus organizations, which is counter to literature saying Latinos are more likely to be interested in campus participation (Pace, 1990). The interest in participation may be due to a number of clubs and organizations that are based on ethnicity, race, or academic/career interest for APA students on a given campus (e.g., Wang et al., 1991). Thus, at this campus, the number of organizations pertaining to the diversity within the APA community may create more interest to become involved for incoming students. Interestingly, while APA students are interested in joining clubs and organizations, they do not believe that they have requisite skills to be a leader. Moreover, APA students may conceptualize "leadership" as counter to their values in relationships (i.e., directive versus harmonious relationships) and would eschew the label of "leader" in favor of something less aggressive.

Among the Latino American students, results show that they tend to have a greater racial diversity in friendship. This may be related to the racial diversity endogenous to the nominal category of "Latino or Hispanic" (e.g., Black Cubans or Puerto Ricans) (Vasquez, 1994). As entering students, Latinos tended not to believe that they were going to be lonely or have a difficulty time adjusting to the collegiate social life. These students also felt that the easiest part of adjusting to college would be meeting new students and people. The perceived easier transition into college may be associated with previous exposure to racism wherein APA students tended to perceive more discrimination than Latino students (Sodowsky et al., 1991). Latino American students' comfort in working on group projects may reflect a collective attitude of Latino cultures (Atkinson, Morten, et al., 1989), as well as a means to interact meaningfully with other students and faculty in their environment (Liu, 1995).

Results also show some relationship between co-curricular perceptions and counseling use. First, the interest in seeking counseling for alcohol problems was significantly related to interest in joining a Greek letter organization. This may be associated with their perception of what these organizations do and some interest in pro-actively attenuating possible alcohol issues. In addition, these students may be more realistic in their self-appraisal (i.e., non-cognitive variables) (Fuertes et

al., 1994) in knowing that they may have difficulty organizing their time as well as possible alcohol use. As new students who believe that they may have difficulty adjusting to the social life of campus, they may be taking proactive measures in learning about alcohol problems before they start.

The students interested in alcohol counseling were also interested in emotional social counseling. Related to this interest was the belief that they may be lonely during their freshman year, have difficulty with the social milieu, interest in joining a Greek letter organization, difficulty organizing their time, and difficulty adjusting to collegiate academic work. This may indicate that, while the Greek letter organization (due to heavy and visible recruiting) may be one social support mechanism, it may not provide enough support or help in terms of personal issues related to career, academics, or emotional-social concerns. Similarly, those students who have an accurate appraisal of themselves and possible problems that they may encounter may be inclined to seek psychological help before serious issues occur. Latino students may seek out counseling for emotional social concerns associated with factors such as academics, financial concerns, and separation from their family and being independent. However, APA students may seek emotional social counseling for feelings of isolation on campus and choosing a major or career.

Thus, those students who were inclined to seek emotional social counseling were also interested in having more information for major and career choice as well as interest in career counseling. For APA students, the presenting issue of a career may lead to other emotional social issues (Cheng et al., 1993, Liu & Sedlacek, 1995, Tracey et al., 1986). For both groups, information on vocational and major choice is related to career counseling and a belief that they will have difficulty with their academics (Latinos more so than APA students). These students were also inclined to believe they would have difficulty balancing their time and adjusting to the social life on campus. Feelings of isolation may be associated with a misperception of what collegiate "social life" will be, especially for first-generation college students, and the feeling that they may not be able to study, play, and work efficiently throughout their college career.

Those students who indicated an interest in using emotional-social and career counseling were also likely to have difficulties managing time. Fuertes et al. (1994) pointed out that for APA students, and likely for Latino students, commitment and participation in their community is

important. These many time pressures related to academics, jobs, community service, and co-curricular participation may result in students feeling overly stressed. Similarly, they may feel as though they need to make the best choice (e.g., academically and vocationally) possible for themselves and their family. With all these concerns and time commitments, APA and Latino students may need counseling for personal concerns as well as career guidance. As other researchers have pointed out (e.g., Solberg, Choi, et al., 1994), previous counseling use leads to further use. Students who indicated a proclivity toward using counseling services for one issue may be likely to use other counseling services as well (e.g., career use may lead to personal social counseling). Results tend to support the notion that use of counseling services for one issue or concern may manifest in other counseling use among both groups.

As the population changes, the need for more bilingual services will increase (e.g., translators) (Santiago-Rivera, 1995). Counseling centers would also benefit from training undergraduate student leaders to be pseudo-counselors, who are knowledgeable about referrals and counseling for other students (Solberg, Choi, et al., 1994). Similarly, since many APA and Latino students often use clubs/organizations, religious and off campus groups as a means to cope with personal or academic problems, it would be advisable to gear publicity and educational literature toward these groups. The student and community leaders can then help disseminate information for members. Through these individuals and their acceptance and promotion of psychological services, the "stigma" of using psychological services may be diminished.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of APA and Latino Student's Perception of Campus Participation and Use of Counseling Services

Item	Race				All Students	
	APA		Latino			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
I do not have the skills to be a leader on campus.	3.16	1.11	3.45	.99	3.23	1.08
I am interested in seeking counseling for emotional-social issues.	3.73	1.11	4.03	.98	3.81	1.09
I want to join some campus club or group.	1.97	.88	2.23	1.03	2.04	.93
I feel comfortable working with others on a group project.	2.23	.96	2.00	.95	2.16	.97
Most of my friends are of my own race.	3.27	1.30	3.62	.99	3.36	1.26
I expect to be lonely during my freshman year.	3.62	1.15	3.91	1.07	3.70	1.13
I expect to have a hard time adjusting to the social life in college.	3.16	1.07	3.49	1.01	3.24	1.06

Note. *$p < .05$ using MANOVA.

Table 2

Relationship Between Perceived Counseling Use and Co-curricular participation among APA and Latino American students.

Co-Curricular & Counseling Perception	Type of Counseling		
	Alcohol	E-S	Career
I do not have the skills to be a leader on campus.	-.03	.03	-.04
I plan to join a sorority or fraternity while at UMCP.	.11*	.15**	.06
I expect to be lonely during my freshmen year.	-.04	.14**	.05
I expect to have a hard time adjusting to the social life in college.	.11*	.25**	.13*
I want to join some campus clubs or groups.	-.03	.00	.07
I feel comfortable working with others on a groups project.	-.08	-.07	.07
I expect to have difficulties organizing my time in college.	.37**	.19**	.13*
Most of my friends are of my own race.	.05	.12*	-.03
I expect to have a hard time adjusting to the academic work of college.	.02	.19**	.13*
I am interested in seeking counseling for problems with alcohol.	1.00	.37**	.09
I am interested in seeking counseling regarding emotional-social concerns.	.37**	1.00	.25
I am interested in seeking counseling regarding my career plans.	.09	.25**	1.00

Note. *p < .05 and **p<.01.

Table 3

Racial differences in College Expectations

Item	Percentage of Respondents Stating Option	
	APA	Latino
Easiest part of adjusting to college		
Studying efficiently	6.6	8.4
Being independent	30.0	23.5
Earning satisfactory grades	6.6	2.5
Getting to meet and know other students	20.0	34.5
Meeting financial expenses	6.0	3.4
Budgeting time	2.3	2.5
Leaving my family	7.7	4.2
Meeting new people different from me	9.4	14.3
Selecting a major or career	9.1	5.9